Article

Communicative Games As Key Elements In Teaching Foreign Languages

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Abstract: The article considers the importance of implementation of communicative games in the process of teaching of foreign languages in primary school as a nain factor of teaching efficiency. Furthermore, this paper explores the role of communicative games in enhancing language learning by promoting interactive, student-centered activities that foster both linguistic competence and communicative proficiency.

1. Introduction

In the modern approach to language teaching, communicative methods emphasize interaction and practical language use over mere memorization of grammar rules or vocabulary. One effective way to implement this communicative approach is through the use of communicative games. These games serve as valuable tools in creating engaging, interactive, and authentic learning environments. Here's an exploration of why and how communicative games are integral in teaching foreign languages.

By creating an immersive environment, these games encourage authentic communication, allowing learners to practice language skills in dynamic, context-rich scenarios. The study highlights various types of communicative games, such as role-plays, simulations, and problem-solving tasks, and examines their impact on student engagement, vocabulary acquisition, grammar usage, and fluency development. Additionally, it addresses the potential of games to create a low-stress learning atmosphere, which can increase motivation and reduce language anxiety. Ultimately, this paper argues that communicative games are indispensable in modern foreign language classrooms, as they not only enhance linguistic skills but also cultivate critical thinking, collaboration, and cultural awareness among learners.

Before defining the value of the word "game", we can say that playfulness is in line with the didactic ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau who wrote in "Emile": "Donner à l'enfant le désir d'apprendre et toute méthode sera bonne", that is, "Give the child the desire to learn and any method will be good" and in the following words of Pablo Neruda: «L'enfant qui ne joue pas n'est pas un enfant, mais l'homme qui ne joue pas a perdu l'enfant qui vivait en lui», that is, "The child who does not play is not a child, but the man who does not play has lost the child who lived in him".

It seems that the definitions used by authors are all contradictory. We could retain a definition that seems as legitimate as another and therefore like any definition issued, it can be denounced by anyone. If we take the definition of the term "game" in the dictionary, that is to say "activity that aims at pleasure, at the distraction of oneself and others".

The term game (from the Latin Jocus, joke) evokes above all pleasure, the objective of the one who plays [Jérôme Carrière, 2010:13-14].

Play is part of our lives. It allows us, for a time, to get out of the "here, now", to experiment, to imagine, to create, to test our ability to solve new problems, etc. The essential characteristics of play can be summed up in a few words: pleasure, spontaneity, gratuitousness (accomplishment of an act for what it is in itself) and creativity of the act performed. It meets a need for relaxation, pleasure, exploration and discovery of the individual. It allows to organize, to structure one's psychic process and to develop one's cognitive and affective capacities.

It affects all age groups, all social categories and all human temperaments, from the most timid to the most daring. Here we will start from the common definition of the word "game": "Recreational activity obeying certain more or less strict rules" [Dictionnaire Flammarion, 1963:862].

According to the Petit Robert: "Game is a purely gratuitous physical or mental activity which has, in the consciousness of the person engaging in it, no other goal than the pleasure it provides"; "…activity organized by a system of rules defining success and failure, gain and loss". [Petit Robert, 1981:1046]

K.D.Ushinsky believed that the game is a unique kind of free and conscious activity that delivers not only pleasure, but also allow to assert themselves in interesting classes, because the game combines aspiration, feeling and performance.

2. Materials and Methods

Here we can see the common elements of both definitions: recreational activity and the existence of a series of rules of behavior. To understand the game, we must refer to the usages, to what is called thus. The only legitimate definition can only be descriptive, the one which, like dictionaries, lists "all the observable uses of the word at a given time". But this description makes us understand, beyond the usages of the word, what is the game?

Why play in the classroom?

Playing in the classroom is not just a way to pass time; it is a powerful pedagogical tool that can enhance learning, engage students, and make educational experiences more enjoyable and meaningful. Here are several reasons why play is essential in the classroom:

- for motivation among audiences for whom this teaching is compulsory;

- playfulness often allows a few "bad" students to actively take part in class activities;

- learning is more enjoyable;

- a very valuable tool for freeing up the learner's speech by de-dramatizing the learning situation.

3. Results

Playful activities often involve repetition, which is key to reinforcing concepts. When students actively participate in games, they are repeatedly exposed to the material, which helps solidify their understanding and memory. Additionally, when students enjoy the process, they are more likely to retain the knowledge.

Example: A vocabulary-building game like Bingo or memory matching helps students internalize words through repeated engagement and competition.

Promotes Social Interaction and Collaboration. Games in the classroom often require students to work together, encouraging collaboration and teamwork. These social interactions not only improve communication skills but also help develop problem-solving abilities and foster a sense of community within the classroom. Students learn to share ideas, listen to others, and cooperate toward a common goal. Example: Group-based games, or team trivia, encourage students to work together, pooling their knowledge and skills to win.

4. Discussion

Encourages Creative and Critical Thinking. Many games involve strategy, problem-solving, and creative thinking. When students are playing, they often have to think on their feet, make decisions quickly, and consider different perspectives. This type of cognitive engagement challenges students to think critically and innovatively. Games like require students to analyze information and apply knowledge in a creative, time-sensitive manner.

Besides that, a game used well in class is as relevant as a grammar exercise or other types of activities. Some preliminary questions may arise about the use of games in lessons. Let's start with: what is the objective of the chosen game? Then, we must take into account the audience to whom the game is addressed? What knowledge must the learner have acquired to practice the playful activity? At what point in the sequence should it be used? At the beginning? At the end of the lesson? etc.

A la dernière question nous allons répondre en nous appuyant sur notre stage :

- brainstorming, which consists of asking learners to mobilize all the vocabulary, is rather inserted at the beginning of the course in order to introduce a sequence topic;

- presentation activities, also called: "icebreakers" to relax the atmosphere that we will use at the beginning of the first sequence;

- on the other hand, we will rather use the role play at the end of a course which allows to reuse in this activity what has just been seen.

Any production (oral or written) in a foreign language involves a certain amount of stress. The learner feels in danger when, in front of the class, he has to express himself. The game offers this opportunity to hide part of this anxiety. It generates a pleasure that makes the learner forget part of his fears. He takes the plunge and dares. Isn't this one of the goals pursued by the foreign language teacher?

In order for the learner to feel comfortable in natural communication, it is necessary, within the classroom, to give him the opportunity to exercise his talents, to express himself in situations that are as close as possible to natural exchange situations, not only with the teacher, but also with his peers. He must be given the opportunity to "test" his linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic skills so that he can discover the keys to successful communication in the language he is learning. The game offers this field of experience.

Another great advantage of fun activities is that they bring the group together, they create a climate of trust, cooperation, and respect that allows everyone to feel at home and dare to express their needs. They create links between the different participants through group activities. They allow for the diversification of associations among learners through the formation and variation of these groups.

Due to the diversity of activities that can be proposed, the learner will be a reader, receiver, writer, speaker and interlocutor. He will be led to mobilize his acquired vocabulary, grammar, phonetics, lexicon, etc. to reinvest them in an attractive and permissive context at a level of performance that he alone sets.

The game provokes interaction in which the learner is both receiver and producer and where he must exercise his capacity for anticipation (he thinks about what he is going to answer while he listens to what is said to him) as in a real social interaction.

C'est l'application du principe selon lequel le sujet apprend mieux s'il est engagé personnellement tout entier dans une action. Nous savons déjà que nous retenons approximativement lorsque nous faisons attention á une information statistique. Nous retenons:

- 10% of what we read, 20% of what we hear, 30% of what we see, 50% of what we see and hear at the same time.

According to the same estimates and under the same conditions of attention, we retain on the other hand:

- 80% of what we say, 90% of what we say while doing something about which we think and which involves us.

In addition, the learner will be led, through the experience of the game, to put into practice two functions that speech fulfills:

1. The propositional function (what the words say);

2. The illocutionary function (what we do with the words; give an order, accuse, apologize, etc.).

These two functions will be implemented spontaneously.

It will be necessary to ensure, as the CEFR advises, to propose tasks with motivating but achievable goals. Therefore, be careful to base yourself on the communicative needs of the learners, on their skills, both general and communicative language, and on their resources. A high level of personal motivation in carrying out a task will lead the learner to greater involvement and, consequently, to a more effective mobilization of their knowledge, from previous knowledge and experiences. These will be confronted with those of their interlocutors in order to reach a new level of performance.

Playing in the classroom goes beyond simple entertainment; it is a crucial educational strategy that supports student engagement, deepens understanding, and fosters skills that are valuable both academically and socially. By integrating play into lessons, teachers can create a more inclusive, dynamic, and effective learning environment that motivates students, enhances retention, and encourages the development of a wide range of skills. The playful nature of these activities helps students view learning as enjoyable rather than a chore, making them more likely to succeed and develop a passion for learning.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, we say that the implementation of complex communicative games is learned: of course, through practice itself. Finally, the introduction of games in the classroom respects the perspective of learning the language through the execution of tasks as recommended by the CEFR. The latter places great importance on the playful, aesthetic and poetic use of language (points 4.3.4 and 4.3.5) in a resolutely action-oriented approach.

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